

# UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

**University of Maryland**

**School of Social Work**

**Ruth H. Young Center for Families and Children**

**Maryland KEEP Annual Evaluation Report**

**November 2011**

**Program Period: Spring 2010 – Fall 2011**

**Elizabeth J. Greeno, PhD, LCSW-C**

**Terry V. Shaw, PhD, MSW, MPH**

**Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW**

**Jessica Moore, BA**

**Mathew Uretsky, MSW, MPH**

**Leslie Rozeff, LCSW-C**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	ii
Program Overview.....	1
Evaluation Overview.....	1
Evaluation Questions.....	4
Preliminary Evaluation Results.....	4
Placement and Permanency Assessment for MD KEEP .....	4
Assessment of Maryland KEEP for Children and Parents.....	7
Foster/Kinship Parent Discipline and Supervision.....	10
Foster/Kinship Parent Retention.....	10
Summary of Evaluation Findings.....	10
References.....	12

### List of Tables

Table 1. Sample Demographics for Foster/Kinship Participants.....	3
Table 2. Demographics of KEEP Foster/Kinship Care Children.....	3
Table 3. KEEP Experimental Group Cohorts.....	5
Table 4. Permanency Characteristics of KEEP Foster/Kinship Children.....	5
Table 5. Placement of Children in KEEP.....	6
Table 6. KEEP and Placement Stability.....	7
Table 7. PDR Baseline and Posttest.....	8

### List of Figures

Figure 1. PDR Results.....	9
Figure 2. CBCL Scores.....	9

Suggested Citation: Greeno, E.J., Shaw, T.V., Barth, R.P., Moore, J., Uretsky, M., & Rozeff, L. (2011). *Maryland KEEP Annual Evaluation Report, November 2011*. University of Maryland School of Social Work, Ruth H. Young Center for Families and Children.

## **Executive Summary**

The Maryland KEEP project evaluation is designed to study program goals and outcomes. Specifically, retention of foster parents, behaviors of children in care, and placement disruptions and stability will be assessed. The following report indicates outcomes for the foster/kinship parents who attended the Maryland KEEP program. Highlights from the evaluation are summarized here and presented in the report that follows. This preliminary outcome information is limited by the small sample size and the truncated length of time post the KEEP trainings. However, these preliminary results provide an indication regarding the efficacy of KEEP. There are clear indications that the Maryland KEEP program has been successful in terms of placement stability, decreasing child problem behaviors, and reducing foster/kinship parent stress.

## **Highlights**

1. The Maryland KEEP program served children in Maryland's child welfare system with very diverse child welfare experiences, especially in terms of placement characteristics and number of children with a prior removal.
2. The Maryland KEEP program served foster/kinship parents with fairly diverse backgrounds in terms of caregiver background experience. In addition, 40.5% of the participants were kinship providers.
3. Almost a quarter of the children involved in the KEEP program (24.2%) who were included in the permanency data analysis were able to exit care; all to a positive placement (adoption or guardianship).
4. Two-thirds of the children involved in the KEEP program who were included in the permanency analysis remained in their placement after KEEP.
5. Prior to the KEEP program, 30% (10) children involved in the KEEP program who were included in the permanency data analysis had unstable placement moves. Of these 10 children, 9 (90%) were in stable placements after the KEEP training.
6. The posttest results suggest that the parents who participated in the KEEP groups are observing less behavior problems from their identified foster/kinship child, report a less stressful reaction to those behaviors, and are increasing positive reinforcement.
7. The preliminary results from this evaluation suggest significant beneficial impacts of the KEEP foster/kinship training program. The Maryland KEEP training program provided services to a diverse sample of children. The results from Maryland KEEP demonstrate KEEP's effectiveness with regards to placement stability and positive exits from the child welfare system.

## **Program Overview**

Maryland KEEP is an empirically-based training and support program for foster and kinship providers with children between the ages of 4 and 12. The KEEP intervention has been shown to significantly decrease placement disruptions, increase permanency and reduce tough behaviors for children in care (Chamberlain et al., 2008; DeGarmo, Chamberlain, Leve, & Price, 2009). Additionally, KEEP provides support to resource parent retention efforts, strengthens the network of foster care families and provides resource parents with practical skills to address the behavioral and emotional challenges of the children in their care. KEEP was designed by Dr. Patricia Chamberlain and the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC), modeled after the evidence-based practice of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care. KEEP groups meet once a week for 16 weeks and last 90 minutes per session. The KEEP program involves intensive services for the group participants that include weekly telephone consultation by a KEEP facilitator and in-home makeup sessions should a foster/kinship parent miss a group session. Along with the training and support offered in KEEP groups, parents receive a stipend for attending the program and credit towards their required foster parent training hours. Additionally, the group provides on-site childcare and refreshments during the sessions.

✱ Trainings for Maryland KEEP began in the Spring of 2010. Since this time, 59 foster/kinship parents have participated in seven KEEP groups (cohorts). Among these 59 participants, 52 parents participated in the Maryland KEEP evaluation study. The remaining 7 foster/kinship parents were partners or spouses who participated in the group but not in the evaluation. Of the foster/kinship parents that were eligible for participation in the MD KEEP study, 100% participated.

## **Evaluation Overview**

The Maryland KEEP evaluation is designed to study program goals and outcomes. Specifically, retention of foster parents, behaviors of children in care, and placement disruptions and stability will be assessed. The study design for Maryland KEEP consists of a quasi-experimental non-equivalent comparison group. There are two groups involved with this evaluation; foster parents who attended the KEEP trainings (the experimental group) and foster parents who did not attend KEEP trainings (the comparison group). The following report indicates outcomes for the Maryland KEEP Experimental group.

All foster/kinship parents who participate in the KEEP program are eligible for participation. The foster/kinship parents answer questionnaires based on their experience and

their opinions regarding the foster/kinship child that has been identified for the study (child must be between the ages of 4-12). For evaluation purposes, only one foster/kinship parent and one foster/kinship child per household can be included in the study. (For consistency, the same foster parent is asked to answer all questionnaires). Foster/Kinship parents for the experimental group are measured pre and post by the following measures: Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey, Parent Daily Report, Discipline and Supervision Measure, Stress and Social Support questionnaires, and the Child Behavior Checklist. All measures were administered by telephone. There are three phone calls to the parents before the beginning of the KEEP intervention and then three phone calls post intervention. The post intervention measures begin 5 months after the first Maryland KEEP training (the first training of the 16-week training). All foster/kinship parents receive \$30 at the end of their participation with the Maryland KEEP evaluation to reimburse them for their time with the Maryland KEEP evaluation.

Evaluation results are based on the first five cohorts of the foster/kinship parents who attended the KEEP trainings. The majority (97%) of these participants were female. However, it is noted that of the couples included in the KEEP trainings, the female partners elected to participate in the KEEP evaluation. Table 1 details the demographics for the kinship/foster parent participants and Table 2 details the demographics for the children of kinship/foster parents who attended KEEP. The foster/kinship providers who attended KEEP were largely White/Caucasian (54%), had an average of 2.2 foster or kinship children in the home, and were an average of 47 years old. In addition, the majority of foster/kinship parents (67%) had a child for between one and four children placed in their home; 40% were kinship/relative providers. However, the average length of stay for a foster/kinship child was divided among the time response options (i.e., 0-6 months; see Table 1). The majority of the foster/kinship children of the parents who attend the KEEP program were female (55.6%), White/Caucasian (52.8%), with an average age of 7.4.

Table 1: Sample Demographics for the MD KEEP Evaluation Foster/Kinship Participants

Variable	Finding (% or Average)
Ethnicity	
Black/African American	30% (n = 11)
White/Caucasian	54% (n = 20)
Hispanic	5% (n = 2)
More than one race	11% (n = 4)
Age	47.5, Range 28-72 ( <i>SD</i> = 11.4)
Relative/Kinship Providers	40.5% (15)
Total # of Foster or Kinship Children in the home	2.2, Range 1-8 ( <i>SD</i> 1.5)
Total # of Children Placed in Home (ever)	
1-4	67%% (n = 10)
5-9	20% (n = 7)
>10	13% (n = 5)
Longest Length of Stay of Foster/Kinship Child	
0-6 Months	21.6% (n = 8)
7-12 Months	24.3% (n = 9)
13-18 Months	13.5% (n = 5)
19-24 Months	13.5% (n = 5)
> 24 Months	27.1% (n = 10)

\* = based on the 37 KEEP Evaluation Participants

Table 2. Demographics of the KEEP Kinship/Foster Care Children

Variable*	Finding (% or Average)
Gender	
Male	16 (44.4%)
Female	20 (55.6%)
Ethnicity	
Black/African American	10 (27.8%)
White/Caucasian	19 (52.8%)
Other	5 (13.8%)
Missing	2 (5.6%)
Age	7.4, Range 4-11 ( <i>SD</i> = 2.1)

\* = based on 36 children identified in CHESSIE (one child was placed in an informal Kinship Placement and there was not a record in CHESSIE).

## Evaluation Questions

In efforts to determine the effectiveness and impact of the Maryland KEEP program, the evaluation focuses on the following questions:

1. What is the Placement and Permanency Impact for children of foster/kinship parents who have attended KEEP?
2. What is the impact of Maryland KEEP on the identified foster child's behavior?
3. What problems are causing the most stress to foster/kinship parents and are these problems impacted by the KEEP program?
4. Does the foster/kinship parents' discipline and supervision method change over time?
5. What is the retention of the foster/kinship parents involved with the Maryland KEEP program?

## Preliminary Evaluation Results

*What is the Placement and Permanency Impact for children of foster/kinship parents who have attended KEEP?*

MD CHESSIE is the system of record for the Maryland Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration and is the source of all data used to review applicable permanency data for this report. The permanency outcome information available for this evaluation report is limited by the small sample size and the relatively brief length of time post the KEEP trainings (see Table 3). Results are, therefore, preliminary and only suggestive of the efficacy of KEEP. As the sample size grows and more time elapses following KEEP, we will have a fuller picture of the impact of the KEEP program.

Table 4 details the permanency characteristics for the children involved with the KEEP program. A review of these characteristics suggests that the KEEP program served children in Maryland's child welfare system with very diverse child welfare experiences, especially in terms of placement characteristics. There is a wide range regarding the amount of time in placement prior to the KEEP Implementation (4 days to 4 years and 6 months). In addition, 27% (n=9) children had a prior removal before the start of the KEEP program, this is a high proportion of children with prior child welfare experience (when compared to statewide statistics in Maryland). Similarly, there is a wide variation for the length of time to exit child welfare after the KEEP program with a range of 1 day to 11 months. Of note, 8 of the 33 children (24.2%)

included in the permanency data analysis were able to exit care; all to a positive placement (adoption or guardianship).

Table 3. KEEP Experimental Group Cohort

Cohort #	Date Training Completed	As of November 2011 Length of Time Post KEEP Training
1	July 2010	16 Months
2	September 2010	14 Months
3	March 2011	8 Months
4	June 2011	5 Months
5	August 2011	3 Months

Table 4. Permanency Characteristics of KEEP Foster/Kinship Children

Variable	Finding (% or Average)*
Children with a Removal	33 (89.2%)
Length of Time in Care Prior to KEEP Implementation	
Minimum Time	4 days
Median Time	1 Year & 5 Months
Maximum Time	4 Years & 6 Months
Number of Children with Prior Removals	27.3% (9)
Number of Children Exited Care by November 2011	<b>24.2% (8); Of These Children:</b> 5 (15%) Children Exited to Adoption 3 (9%) Exited to Relative Guardianship
Length of Time Post KEEP Training to Exit	
Minimum Time	1 Day
Median Time	2 Months
Maximum Time	11 Months
Permanency Goal for the 8 Children who Exited	
Permanency Goal of Adoption for Exits	50% (4)
Permanency Goal of Guardianship	37.5% (3)
Permanency Goal of Reunification	12.5% (1)

\* = These findings are based on an N of 33; 4 Children were placed in Informal Kin Placements and information is not available in CHESSIE

Table 5 details prior placements and placement changes post the KEEP implementation. For the foster/kinship children participating in the KEEP program, the placement number (for the placement at the time of KEEP) was fairly evenly divided between the first and second placement. However, for almost a quarter of the sample population, the placement at the time of KEEP was either 3 or greater. Of significance, two-thirds of the children remained in their placement after KEEP. All eight children who had one placement move exited child welfare (see Table 4, Permanency Goal for the 8 Children who Exited). Of the remaining 5 children, 1 child moved to a higher level of care, 1 child moved to a different kinship placement, and the remaining 3 children moved to a different foster home. Foster parents reported this move was due to changes in the dynamics of the foster parent's home and needs of the foster child.

Table 5. Placement of Children in KEEP

Variable	Finding (% or Average)*
Placement Number at the Start of KEEP Implementation	
First Placement	42.4% (14)
Second Placement	33.3% (11)
Third + Placement	24.2% (8)
Placement Changes After KEEP Implementation	
Zero	66.7% (22)
One	24.2% (8)
Two	9.1% (3)

\* = These findings are based on an N of 33; 4 Children were placed in Informal Kin Placements and placement information is not available for these children in CHESSIE

Early results suggest that participation in KEEP is associated with placement stability. Table 6 indicates a comparison analysis conducted on children in the KEEP sample. Ten of the children, prior to the KEEP program were considered to have unstable placement moves prior to the start of KEEP (more than two placements). Of these 10 children, 9 (90%) were in stable placements after KEEP training.

Table 6. Impact of KEEP on Placement Stability

Impact of KEEP Program on Placement Stability: If we consider children with one or two placement moves prior to implementation as “stable” (S) and then consider any other placement as “unstable” (U). Likewise, after KEEP implementation 0 to 1 placement change is “stable” (Change S) and 2 or more is “unstable” (Change U).	Prior Status	Change Stable	Change Unstable	Total
	S	22 (88%)	3 (12%)	25
	U	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	8
		29(88%)	4 (12%)	33

*What is the impact of Maryland KEEP on the identified foster child's behavior?*

*What problems are causing the most stress to foster/kinship parents and are these problems impacted by the KEEP program?*

The foster/kinship child's behavior was captured with two questionnaires, the Parent Daily Report and the Child Behavior Checklist. Both questionnaires are completed by the identified foster/kinship parent study participant. The Parent Daily Report Checklist (PDR) is a 31-item questionnaire of child behavior problems as reported by parents. The PDR is administered over a period of closely spaced telephone interviews. For the evaluation, three PDRs were administered prior to the parent's attendance of the KEEP trainings and then three PDRs were administered one-month post the last KEEP training. During each phone call, the parents report whether over the last 24-hours if specific behaviors happened or not, with a yes or no indication. And, the parents report how bothered they were by the behavior (score of 1 to 3 with 3 being the most bothered). PDR scores are computed by summing the number of behaviors reported per day (a possible of 31 behaviors) for each phone call and then dividing by the number of calls. Therefore three calls were included for the baseline pretest and three calls were included for the posttest. The pretest data serves as a baseline for child behavior. The internal consistency of the measure was strong with a Cronbach's alpha of .94 for the baseline PDR and an alpha of .88 at posttest.

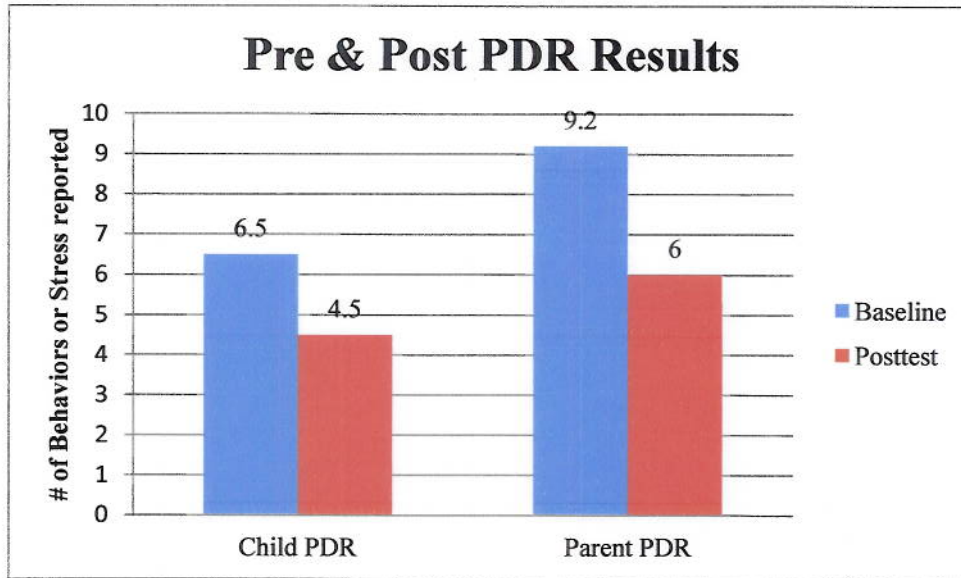
Table 7 demonstrates the results of the baseline and posttest PDRs. There was a significant improvement ( $p < .01$ ) in the scores. The mean number of problem behaviors reported on the PDR was 6.5 at baseline and 4.5 at posttest. This baseline number is higher than what has been reported in prior studies (see Chamberlain et al., 2006). The posttest results suggest that the foster/kinship parents who participated in the KEEP group decrease their reports for the average number of behavior problems displayed by the identified foster/kinship child. The child behaviors of Back-talk, Complain, Defiant, Irritable, and Not Mind were more likely to be frequently reported at baseline and to have decreased at posttest. Chamberlain et. al (2006) found a steady pattern of placement disruptions when the number of baseline reported child problem behaviors was between 6 and 14. And in contrast, children with PDR scores  $< 6$  were found to be at low risk of placement disruption. Using this standard, the Maryland sample at baseline was fairly evenly divided with 48% (18) of children reporting to have between 6 and 14 behaviors, 48% (18) reporting to have  $< 6$  behaviors and 2% (1) reporting 17 problem behaviors. At posttest, 66.7% (14) reported  $< 6$  behaviors and 33% (7) reported between 6 and 12 behaviors (total of 21 available PDRs at posttest). Based on prior research, 48% of the sample at baseline would be considered high risk for placement disruptions compared to 33% post the KEEP training.

In addition, the foster/kinship reports of how bothered they were by their foster/kinship child's behaviors also significantly decreased from baseline to posttest ( $p < .01$ ). This suggests that overall parents were less bothered by their child's behavior following the KEEP training. The specific child behaviors that were likely to bother the parents at baseline and then decrease at posttest were: Competitive, Complain, Defiant, Irritable, Negative, Not Mind, and Sad/Depressed. Figure 1 depicts a graphic representation of the PDR findings.

Table 7. PDR Baseline and Posttest

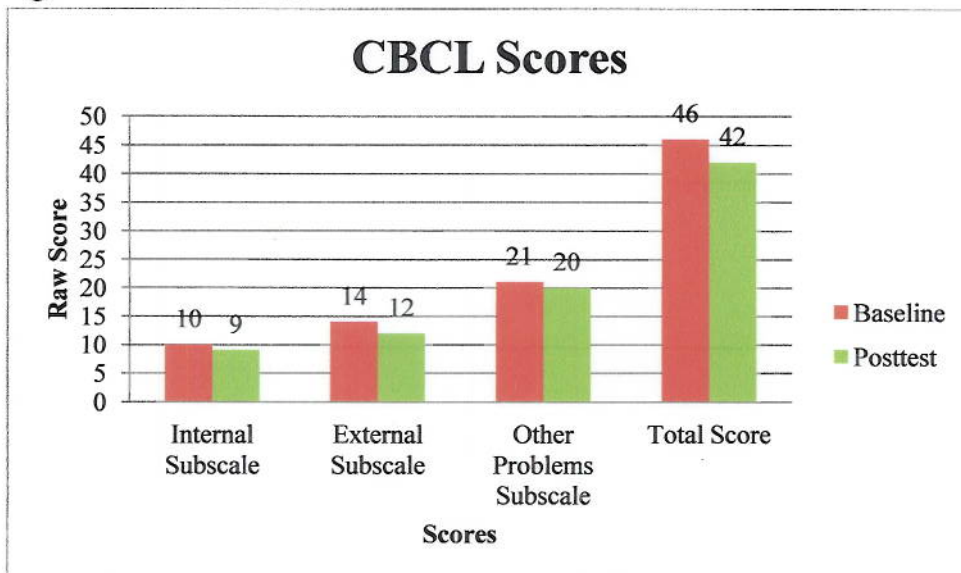
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>SD</b>
Child Behavior PDR			
Baseline PDR	6.5	1-17	4
Posttest PDR	4.5	0-12	3
Parent's Report of "bothered"			
Baseline PDR	9.2	0-30	9
Posttest PDR	6	0-19	5

Figure 1. PDR Results



The Child Behavior Checklist is a parent-report questionnaire where the child is rated on behavioral and emotional problems. There are 113 questions that comprise a total score outcome, and three subscales; the internalizing subscale, externalizing subscale, and other problems subscale. Behavioral and emotional areas such as social withdrawal, anxiety, depression, destructive behavior, social problems, and attention problems are measured. For all subscales and the total score, the reported behavior problems, while not significantly different, were less at posttest when compared to baseline.

Figure 2. CBCL Scores



*Does the foster/kinship parents' discipline and supervision method change over time?*

In addition to the PDR, the foster/kinship parents also complete the Discipline & Supervision Survey (an OSLC measure). These measures are comprised of outputs that suggest discipline, supervision, and encouragement parenting styles. The amount of positive reinforcement and discipline used per day is calculated by aggregating foster parent responses to the PDR and Discipline & Supervision measure. Foster parents were asked how often they use positive reinforcement (i.e., encouragement, rewards, special activity); yielding a positive reinforcement score. The items are rated on a seven-point likert scale that ranges from "I don't use this strategy" to "three times or more per day". The number of discipline techniques (i.e., grounding, time out, remove from the situation) are calculated in an identical fashion; yielding a total discipline score. Foster/Kinship parents involved in the KEEP training had a significant improvement with regards to the use of positive reinforcement ( $p < .01$ ). On average, parents increased their use of positive reinforcement 1.5 times per day. A comparison of the frequency of positive reinforcement to discipline indicates that after the KEEP training, the foster/kinship parents were using a greater positive reinforcement to discipline ratio.

*What is the retention of the foster/kinship parents involved with the Maryland KEEP program?*

Thirty-three foster/kinship providers participated in the KEEP program evaluation posttest surveys. Of the 33 foster/kinship providers, 100% were retained as providers in the State of Maryland. At posttest, all foster/kinship parents reported they were either Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their child care role and 90% indicated they intended to continue providing services in the future. In addition, post the KEEP training foster/kinship parents had a significant increase in satisfaction with regards to social support and contact with other foster parents.

**Summary of Findings**

While the above findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the sample size and limited length of time after the KEEP trainings, these preliminary results suggest significant beneficial impacts of the KEEP foster/kinship training program. The Maryland KEEP training program provided services to a diverse sample of children in terms of prior placement stability variability, length of time in care, and removal episodes. Despite the challenges with the diverse children characteristics, the results from Maryland KEEP demonstrate KEEP's effectiveness with regards to placement stability and positive exits from the child welfare system. Eight (8)

children had positive exits to either an adoptive or guardianship home and two-thirds of children were stabilized in their placement.

In addition, results suggest that KEEP was able to achieve substantial positive outcomes in terms of reduction of child problem behaviors and increases in positive reinforcement; both of which directly affect placement stability, positive exits, and foster/kinship parent retention. The findings from the evaluation of the Maryland KEEP program are comparable to the outcomes reported in previous KEEP evaluation literature; suggesting the effectiveness of KEEP with the Maryland child welfare system.

Results from the preliminary Maryland KEEP evaluation are promising and suggest with more trainings and time, evaluation results could further elucidate beneficial outcomes for Maryland's child welfare system. As Goldhaber-Fiebert et al. (in press) have demonstrated in a sophisticated micro-simulation based on KEEP evaluation data and the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being, the implementation of KEEP provides substantial benefits by reducing placement moves, increasing positive exits from care. This, consequently, can be expected to reduce the need to provide mental health and juvenile services to youth who receive KEEP. KEEP increased the absolute proportion of children who had a positive exit from foster care from 40% to 53% (a relative improvement of about 33%) and decreased the average number of lateral moves from .60 to .39 (a relative improvement of more than 35%). These benefits are especially evident among youth with higher CBCL scores at pretest, above age 9, and residing in non-kinship foster homes; in these cases three times as many placement changes are prevented than in lower risk cases.

Further, estimated improvements in mental health services would be 47%, in relative terms. The reduction in juvenile delinquency would be about 10%. These benefits derive from the direct effects of reducing placement instability and increasing positive outcomes from foster care. These estimates do not include likely benefits from reduced mental health problems and improved educational stability for children nor the costs of replacing foster parents who become disillusioned with the challenges of foster care. Although this is not definitive evidence of the cost-benefit of KEEP, this simulation suggests that the improvements in behavior observed in Maryland's KEEP program could very likely have ripple effects that would have significant developmental and economic benefit.

## References

- Chamberlain, P., Price, J., Leve, L., Laurent, H., Landsverk, J., & Reid, J. (2008). Prevention of behavior problems for children in foster care: Outcomes and mediation effects. *Prevention Science, 9*(1), 17-27.
- Chamberlain, P., Price, J., Reid, J., Landsverk, J., Fisher, P., & Stoolmiller, M. (2006). Who disrupts from placement in foster and kinship care? *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(4), 409-424.
- DeGarmo, D., Chamberlain, P., Leve, L., & Price, J. (2009). Foster parent intervention engagement moderating child behavior problems and placement disruption. *Research on Social Work Practice, 19*(4), 423-433.
- Goldhaber-Fiebert et al. (in press). Evaluating child welfare policies with decision-analytic simulation models. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*.
- Price, J., Chamberlain, P., Landsverk, J., Reid, J., Leve, L., & Laurent, H. (2008). Effects of a foster parent training intervention on placement changes of children in foster care. *Child Maltreatment, 13*(1), 64-75.